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Russian Political Regime Change and Strategies of Diversity Management: From a Multinational Federation towards a Nation-State

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Abstract

This paper explores the impact of the political regime change in post-Soviet Russia on the country's strategy of diversity management. The paper will start with an overview of possible government responses to diversity. In this conceptual framework, the paper will follow the evolution of the place envisaged for diversity in the country's political identity and political institutions in the post-Soviet period. The study will propose a periodization based on contrasting responses of the state to the diversity challenge in the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s. The political regime change correlated with the shift in the political institutional model from a multinational federation towards a nation-state. The new vision of political identity was reflected in the strategies of diversity management.

Keywords: regime change, diversity management, ethnic federalism, nation building, state-building, Russian Federation

Introduction

One prediction of modernization theory is that economic development fosters democratization (Lipset 1959). Scholars in comparative politics also go beyond economic factors and emphasize the role of social and cultural factors in understanding democratization. The

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proliferation of ‘civic’ political culture was identified as the first among political factors (Almond & Verba 1965, Linz & Stepan 1996). Among other factors, modernizationists indicated national unity and effective state as necessary preconditions for democracy (Rustow 1970).

If in the West a strong state and a subsequently imposed sense of national identity typically preceded democratization, then in Russia economic reforms coincided with nation and state-building at the time of transition (see Gel'man 2015: 44-50). Nationalist mobilization in Russia's republics complicated the construction of a new political identity and Soviet institutional legacies largely influenced the formation of new state institutions. Republics represented national liberation as the main road to democratization, while many policymakers in the Centre viewed the existence of ethnic regions as an obstacle to the democratic development that reinforced ethnic cleavages and became associated with regional authoritarianism, ethnic conflict and the threat of the state's disintegration (see Drobizheva 2013: 88-89, 112-113). A weak state and an identity crisis contributed to the failure of democratization.

The simultaneity of these processes and the fact that democratic transition was followed by democratic breakdown makes the post-Soviet period interesting for study because it allows for lifting the level of the analysis and exploring the reversed impact of regime change on accompanying processes, *inter alia*, on the strategies of diversity management. Many studies have assessed diversity management devices in the Russian constitutional design and the evolution in the country's nationalities policy. In his model of the ethno-political pendulum, Emil Pain contrasted the rise in minority nationalism in the early 1990s with the responsive majority nationalism since the mid-1990s (see Pain 2013). One can extend his pendulum metaphor back to the Soviet history and observe how the waves of liberalization and democratization after the state collapses in 1917 and 1991 were conjoined with minority-friendly policies, but were followed by periods of totalitarian and authoritarian rule and tightening control over the minority nationalities.

A negative correlation was found between building a strong state and building democracy (see Bunce 2013: 264-266). Indeed, the democratization and decentralization of the 1990s were followed by authoritarian tendencies and the recentralization of the 2000s, and the establishment of an authoritarian regime and its unificationist urge in the 2010s. However, a study is still missing that would assess how the regime simultaneously pursued both tasks of nation and state-building in relation to diversity management. As there is no generally

accepted causal theory of democratization, only probabilistic arguments can be made. Was there any correlation between the regime change and diversity management during the post-Soviet period?

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of the political regime change on diversity management both in institutional and ideological terms. The study utilizes the historical institutionalist method. If the regime change amounts to a significant rearrangement in the set of political actors and institutions, then the analysis in this study is restricted to finding out how the replacement of political institutions influenced ideological justifications and institutional solutions for diversity management. The study is based on the existing research. The paper overviews only the key political outcomes and does not go into the debates about the possibilities around some controversial issues. Another unavoidable restriction of overviewing is that the paper has to present only very briefly some separable and well-researched issues, such as national-cultural autonomy or assimilation through education and language policies.

There is a considerable conceptual mismatch between international and Russian scholarly discourses about diversity. The analysis benefits from the conceptualization of the approaches to diversity management used in Russia in a comparative perspective. The possible responses of the state to diversity in nation and state-building will be briefly observed in the first part of the paper. To begin with, the choice of the envisaged political institutional model itself was at stake in constitutional identity building in Russia. The model then framed institutional choices to develop new political structures. Comparativists distinguish between certain strategies of diversity management that exist across countries. In particular, the taxonomy of such strategies of state-building in divided societies developed by John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary can serve as a framework for empirical research also in the Russian case (McGarry & O'Leary 1993, McGarry et al. 2008).

This analytical tool enables a diachronic study by mapping changes in applied strategies and contrasting their configuration into stages. This paper proposes to distinguish the periods of the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s as three stages in the development of the post-Soviet state nationalities policy and is structured accordingly. The paper will, in each of its three following parts on the stages, explore what the envisaged political institutional model was and how it was intended to be achieved in terms of diversity management. The paper will start with exploring Soviet legacies and novelties in Russia's constitutional design established under the transitional period of the 1990s to better understand the ethnic specifics of the

Russian model of federalism. After that, the paper will study the erosion of federalism under the authoritarian tendencies of the 2000s and the impact of recentralization on diversity management. Finally, the paper will study the current political regime and its nation-building agenda.

The analysis demonstrates that the political regime change correlated with the envisaged transformation in the country's political identity from a constitutionally enshrined multinational federation towards a nation-state. Accordingly, the new vision of political identity demanded the change in approach from accommodation to integration. More recently, the assimilationist approach comes to the fore.

1. State responses to diversity in its nation and state-building

In order to assess the approaches chosen in Russia, it makes sense to place them in context and outline first what responses a state can choose in dealing with diversity. The responses range between the 'software' of ideologies and the 'hardware' of institutions pursued, respectively, under nation and state-building. The locus for both is the choice of political institutional model of the polity: a nation-state, a multinational state or, for example, even an empire. The building of political identity often takes the form of nation building, which is a process of developing a national identity for the nation-state. National identity is then such a pattern of orientations within a set of social identities where the allegiance to the state enhances support for its legitimacy. Alternatively, a common civic identity is conjoined with the recognition of several nations within a multinational state (Kersting 2011: 1645-1646).

The state-building is then directed at the establishment of political structure and policies that would assert the selected political identity. Historically, the emergence of the nation-state, often after national liberation, became associated with democratization. In this context, nation building was often presented as the universal remedy to democratic transition. Yet, nation building is complementary to democratization only if there is congruence between the *polis* and the *demos* (see Linz & Stepan 1996: 23-24). Otherwise, both democracies and non-democracies might pursue nation-building policies. Furthermore, nation building might be easier to achieve under authoritarian regimes because the latter is less scrupulous in the choice of the means and can employ bold measures to underplay alternative identities. In pursuing nation building, the state strives at achieving the congruence of political and cultural units, which often provokes conflict.

Thus, the state design can address the challenge of diversity and prevent or resolve conflicts. Democracies often rely on civic nation building, but mobilized groups and institutional legacies may hamper its effectiveness. Moreover, the pursuit of nation building in multinational settings would greatly diminish the chances of democratic consolidation. Instead, multinational democracies proved also to be a viable alternative, although they are more difficult to establish (see Linz & Stepan 1996: 24-28). In terms of state-building, the nation-state often strives to assert an overarching national identity by choosing the strategy directed at eliminating differences; a multinational state is typically thought to ensure social cohesion in a diverse society by maintaining differences (McGarry et al. 2008). Usually, the strategies of a nation-state include assimilation and/or integration, while a multinational state is associated with accommodation, but this distinction is not exact.

McGarry, O'Leary & Simeon note that the integrationist strategy aims at the diminution of ethnic differences in favor of an overarching identity, but refrains from using coercive means. They give the illegalization of ethnic parties as an overt marker of a coercive assimilationist state. In the view of its proponents, institutional solutions do not have to reflect ethnic differences but should transform identities in order to create a shared 'civic culture'. The use of the integrationist strategy differs from the assimilationist in that it imposes unification only in the public sphere and does not demand abandonment of one's ethnic identity in private. Republican integrationists stay closer to assimilationists, because they reject federalism and have a longer list of issues to be homogenized in the name of the common good. In the long run, integration might result in assimilation of weak and dispersed groups as a byproduct (McGarry et al. 2008: 42-48). The problem with the integrationist and assimilationist strategies is that in ethnically divided societies they in themselves might become the source of ethnic conflict (see Kymlicka 2007).

An accommodationist strategy for the prevention or resolution of ethnic conflicts is often used as a democratic alternative to integration. Integration might be successful in the case of migrants or territorially dispersed minorities, but the accommodation of territorially concentrated groups might become necessary. A failure to accommodate strong groups might result in the partition or exclusion of those who cannot be assimilated (McGarry et al. 2008: 87-88). Overlapping varieties of the accommodationist strategy include centripetalism, consociationalism, multiculturalism and territorial pluralism (McGarry et al. 2008: 51-67).

According to Arend Lijphart and his consociationalist approach, power sharing is one alternative of accommodation in which all major segments of society should enjoy

proportional representation or at least a share of power, if certain conditions are met. According to him, in order for power sharing to last, communities should enjoy segmental autonomy and their elites should realize the necessity of cooperation (Lijphart 2008: 33). The power-sharing approach was most famously criticized for entrenching ethnic differences by Donald Horowitz (Horowitz 1985). Both Lijphart and Horowitz shared the view that ethnic mobilization is a lasting and recurrent phenomenon. But Horowitz argued that, instead of deepening the ethnic divide through power sharing, the mechanisms that enhance centripetal tendencies should be promoted.

Multiculturalism and territorial pluralism develop, respectively, cultural and territorial versions of segmental autonomy (McGarry et al. 2008: 63-67). These strategies typically provide stronger guarantees for minority participation. Territorial pluralism implies territorial self-governance solutions, which, most notably, can take the form of federalism. Federalism was famously defined by Ronald Watts as a normative concept according to which 'multi-tiered government' should combine 'elements of shared-rule and regional self-rule' (Watts 1996: 6-7). In other words, in addition to regional self-rule, federal systems usually contain elements of shared rule between regional and central government.

Federation often has democratic origins and is not automatically used as a device directed at diversity management. Yet, democracy is not always a prerequisite for federalism and the elites in countries with authoritarian regimes can also choose it as a device of diversity management that ensures political stabilization (McGarry & O'Leary 2005). When federalism is used for this purpose, it can pursue any strategy. Valerie Bunce points out that ethnic federalism 'can function simultaneously as a supporter of both democracy and authoritarianism and both as a state-wrecker and a state-builder' (Bunce 2013: 267-268).

Scholars distinguish between integrated and pluralist federations that aim, accordingly, at integration or accommodation of minorities (McGarry & O'Leary 2015: 22). They have singled out a number of criteria to distinguish between the two. For example, in an integrated federation, the 'Staatsvolk' or 'state-founding nation' numerically dominates in all regions, and in a pluralist federation, whether identified as a multiethnic or multinational federation, the major nationalities control their 'homelands'. An indicator of the situation that predetermines regional regime variety is whether a minority community is in a numerical majority or minority in its homeland. Will Kymlicka noted that 'federalism can only serve as a mechanism for self-government if the national minority forms a majority in one of the federal sub-units' (Kymlicka 1995: 29).

Therefore, federalism *per se* does not guarantee participation of territorially concentrated minorities, which often depends on demography. However, demographic makeup often is not the sole determinant of the strategy, in which case some other mechanisms are created to ensure minority political participation. In addition to the creation of self-ruling nationally or ethnically defined regions, a pluralist federation can accommodate ethnic diversity also as part of shared-rule arrangements between regional and central government both at the federal and regional levels.

2. Democratization and Decentralization of the 1990s

2.1 USSR Collapse and the ‘Parade of Sovereignities’

The Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics, the USSR, was established as a *de jure* multinational federation. It consisted of the union republics that were titled after their ‘titular nations’, that is, indigenous communities that also were proclaimed the sole source of republican authority. In accordance with the principle of national self-determination, the union republics were created by exercising the right to self-determination of their titular Socialist nations (see Burgess 2009: 28). The recognition of many nations and nationalities made for a multinational character of the state. In Soviet terminology, the terms ‘nation’ and ‘national’ referred not to the state as a whole but were reserved specifically to sub-state federation units. Hence, the policy towards ‘nations’ is often specified in English as ‘nationalities policy’.

In the Soviet hierarchy, the status of the union republics was higher than the status of the autonomous republics or districts or regions within the union republics. At the same time, the upper layer of union republics sustained the lower layer of autonomous republics. Since the 1936 Soviet constitution, the titular nationalities of the autonomous republics inside the union republics were also recognized as Socialist nations but not those of autonomous districts and regions. Accordingly, autonomous republics were established as ‘national-state formations’ and autonomous districts as ‘national-territorial formations’ of their titular nationalities (see Codagnone & Filippov 2000: 265-266).

The existence of the union republics, and the need to compromise with their national elites, balanced the multinational structure of the biggest and most diverse union republic, the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR), which was supposed to be the titular republic of ethnic Russians however its title ‘Russian’ referred to a civic [*rossiiskii*] and not

ethnic [*russskii*] category. So did the ascription of personal nationality, although the state pursued assimilationist policies especially in the later decades. The share of ethnic Russians in relation to other nationalities in the RSFSR remained relatively stable, because the intensity of assimilation processes varied across groups (see Brubaker 1996: 30-32).

Despite its huge federal façade, in reality the USSR functioned as a unitary state, behind which inter-ethnic tensions and the nationalist sentiment were accumulating. The Soviet institutionalization of ethnicity in the form of republics provided their elites with ready-made vehicles for popular mobilization. With the weakening of the Soviet political regime, ethnic mobilization in the union republics in the late 1980s led to the emergence of national movements that emphasized the equal right of peoples to national self-determination and demanded what they were promised according to the Soviet constitution. With the progression of democratization, some national organizations were created to express on behalf of the titular peoples the demand for a greater self-governance in the name of their national revival (see Brubaker 1996).

A chain effect also made sovereignization possible in the autonomous republics of Russia. In 1990, most autonomies unilaterally upgraded their political status in the declarations of state sovereignty to that of the republics as sovereign states in the USSR based on the right of their titular peoples to self-determination. The union authorities led by the secretary general of the communist party, Mikhail Gorbachev, were slow in their reaction but started to accommodate some demands. In a tactical move, Gorbachev encouraged the autonomous republics to join a new union treaty directly and to elect their own presidents. This way Gorbachev hoped to undermine the authority of another party functionary, Boris Yeltsin, who in summer 1990 became the chair of the RSFSR Supreme Council, a Soviet style quasi-parliament, and in June 1991 was elected the Russian president.

The authorities of the RSFSR also needed the support of the autonomies and recognized sovereignization. In 1990, a bicameral structure of the RSFSR Supreme Council was established, where the other chamber, the Council of Nationalities, had to be formed of the representatives of the nationally/ethnically defined territorial units with number depending on their political status in the Soviet hierarchy. In practice, the chamber soon started to be filled also by the deputies from the regular territorial units so that their total number was equivalent with the number of the deputies in the other chamber, the Council of the Republic (Ivanchenko & Liubarev 2006: 9-10).

After the collapse of the USSR in 1991 and the departure of union republics, the demographic makeup of Russia started to matter for the nationalities policy. Ethnic Russians composed about an 80% majority in the country's population. Among more than a hundred other nationalities, Tatars were the second largest group of more than five million or 3.8% of the country's population, while several groups were larger than one million. The situations of different groups varied dramatically in terms of demographic trends, territorial concentration and ethnic cleavage structures. Moreover, only up to ten million individuals of titular nationalities resided in their titular territories while almost eight million resided outside their borders. Up to ten million non-Russians had no titular territories altogether and a similar amount of ethnic Russians resided in national territories. In addition, many ethnic Russians remained in the former union republics (see Codagnone & Filippov 2000: 266).

Despite the drive for democratization, Soviet legacies in post-Soviet Russia's state-building were remarkable. Ethnic federalism was maintained, inter alia, due to the position of the democrats organized in the pro-reform movement *Democratic Russia* and the elites in the former autonomous republics who at the time were their allies (Drobizheva 2013: 91-92). The titular elites in the republics presented national self-determination as the historic method of democratization and advocated for a 'treaty-based' multinational federation. The treaty component stemmed from the sovereignty declarations. Yeltsin's government endorsed their demands and, with the authorities of the republics and regions, signed the 1992 Federation Treaty that was incorporated into the 1978 RSFSR Constitution still in force (see Codagnone & Filippov 2000: 268, 272-273).

2.2 Constitutional Design and Semi-presidentialism

In the early 1990s, a conflict burst out between, on the one hand, president Boris Yeltsin backed by democrats and reformists that controlled executive authorities and, on the other hand, the majority in the Supreme Council dissatisfied with the course of reforms, among whom were many members of the communist party and Soviet bureaucracy. The conflict also had a regional dimension expressed in the confrontation over the fiscal issues dubbed as the 'war of budgets', when republics tried to keep their fiscal autonomy (see Oversloot 2013: 90-91). The conflict peaked in the constitutional crisis and ended with the dissolution of the parliament in October 1993, thus, having an outcome based on the principle of 'winner takes all' (Gel'man 2015: 56).

After that, Yeltsin was able to insist on his version of the constitution that established Russia as a semi-presidential republic (Constitution, 12 December 1993). According to this executive regime type, the presidential office was made the strongest institution in the constitutionally framed political system and was tailored to one individual, Yeltsin himself. The semi-presidential system functioned in the form of president-parliamentarism where the government headed by a politically weak prime minister was dually accountable to president and parliament. Yet, the president received the right to do virtually anything not explicitly prohibited by law, and the only constraint on his power was the two consecutive terms limit on holding the presidency, which laid down major authoritarian potential (Gel'man 2015: 54-56).

The constitution created a two-chamber Russian parliament. Deputies of the State Duma, a lower chamber, were to be elected according to the mixed principle in two unlinked electoral arenas, where each voter casts two ballots: for an individual candidate and for a party. One half of the deputies were elected in 225 single mandate districts according to a plurality rule. The other half were elected in proportional representation through the lists of political party and electoral blocs (of several usually smaller parties) in a nationwide electoral district (Moser 2001: 5). In order to hinder the establishment of ethnic and region-based electoral blocs and, thus, to discourage ethnic mobilisation, the election law established that no more than 15% of signatures for registration of a bloc in federal elections can come from any single region. While effectively preventing the creation of federal ethnic parties, this rule also led to disengagement of regional elites and electorates in ethnic regions from party politics in federal elections (Moser 1995: 384-386).

The mixed electoral system was fashioned in order to encourage party formation and to benefit the reformist parties. *Democratic Russia* joined the electoral bloc *Russia's Choice*, the 'party of power'. However, the population was disenchanted with the pace of economic reforms that caused a fall in living standards. In the December 1993 parliamentary elections, the people gave a plurality of votes to anti-reformist parties in the fractionalized first State Duma. Moreover, rather unexpectedly the nationalist Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) headed by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy actually won plurality in the nationwide district, while *Russia's Choice* came only second, even though it won more seats in single-mandate districts and the overall election. In December 1995, *Our Home is Russia*, a new 'party of power' came only third in the nationwide district and second in the overall elections, losing to the Communist Party (Moser 2001: 1). These outcomes were not a game changer, given the

secondary role of parliament in the political system. However, since December 1993 the democrats started losing their positions in the corridors of power, which was a blow to the democratization agenda.

Due to a lack of legal-institutional guarantees, political representation of minorities was to be attained through mainstream parties in popular elections. Nevertheless, researchers report that a relatively adequate and substantial ethnic representation was achieved in federal elections in 1995 and 1999, because political parties were often willing to include the names of candidates with a minority ethnic background at the top of their lists to present an ethnically pluralist platform (see Chaisty 2013). Members of culturally assimilated minorities, especially those with the Russian names, were relatively numerous in party lists. Titular representatives typically won in single mandate districts in their regions, not only through ethnic voting but also gaining the support of Russian voters, who seemed to be interested in personalities and regional issues rather than in ideologies, be it liberalism, communism or nationalism. The presence of the large portions of the Russian populations tended to favour titular candidates with more centrist views (Moser 2001: 147).

In a bicameral parliament, the upper chamber is typically created to ensure the representation of regional, ethnic and corporative interests. According to the constitution, members of the Federation Council, an upper chamber, were elected from the regions and represented the regional interests in the center. If during its first term in 1994-1996, the Federation Council was a rather weak body, then the strengthened position of regional chief executives, both heads of the republics and governors of the regions, vis-à-vis the federal centre has found its reflection, inter alia, in the changed principle of formation of the Federation Council. Since 1996 the heads of regional legislative and executive authorities *ex officio* became its members (see Ross & Turovsky 2013: 62-63).

Given Yeltsin's low popularity, his re-election became possible only through a narrow win against Russia's Communist Party leader Gennadii Ziuganov in the second round of the 1996 presidential elections. Up to this day the question about the extent of electoral fraud remains unresolved, but elections are believed to be unfair (Gel'man 2015: 59-61). The support for Yeltsin from regional chief executives through 'regional electoral machines' especially in the ethnic regions was found to be among the decisive factors for his victory. The new principle of formation of the Federation Council was one of the concessions to the regional leaders but simultaneously an element of division of power that strengthened the federation (see Ross & Turovsky 2013: 63-64).

Overall, the representation of regions by their top officials in the Federation Council and the representation of deputies to the State Duma elected in single mandate districts in the regions became the only institutionalized elements that could indirectly ensure ethnic political participation in the federal authorities. In addition, the federal government had a ministry for nationalities and federation affairs. In other words, the constitution has not envisaged shared-rule arrangements at the federal level. Furthermore, Yeltsin not only spent significant efforts consolidating power in the center but also overcoming centrifugal tendencies in relations with the republics.

2.3 Ethnic Federalism and National-Cultural Autonomy

It was a Soviet legacy that federalism by default became an instrument of decentralization in Russia, but now regions enjoyed genuine self-rule. It was the former autonomous republics that unilaterally upgraded their political status, demanded greater self-governance and were the drivers of federalization. Under the threat of the country's disintegration, the federal center and the republics reached a compromise (see Burgess 2009: 31-32). In balancing centrifugal and centripetal tendencies, the system of ethnic federalism remained the main device directed at managing diversity, but the scope of its ethnic component was significantly reduced, because only some regions were ethnically based and no shared rule at the federal government level was established. Furthermore, the titular nationalities were in the numerical majority in less than half among twenty one republics, and in none among ten autonomous districts and an autonomous region at the time.

Was Russia a multinational or multiethnic federation? The public debate about political identity held in the situation of the constitutional crisis had not resulted in an explicit formula. Partly this was because at the time there was no clear-cut distinction between 'ethnic' and 'national' in the Russian-language scientific discourse. The Soviet legacy of institutionalized ethnicity was criticized for its essentialist assumptions, although it was arguably not ethnic federalism *per se* but its dismantlement in the late Soviet period that led to the accumulation of tensions and provoked conflicts. The need for the depoliticization of ethnicity and its removal from the public sphere was justified by the change of paradigm in social sciences towards the constructivist understanding of social identity. But this paradigmatic change was not reflected in constitutional identity building.

According to the constitution, Russia's 'multinational people' was proclaimed to be the sole bearer of sovereignty, which was another Soviet legacy. Thus, Russia could still be categorized as a *de facto* multinational federation, although it avoided explicitly referring to

republics as ‘national republics’. The peculiarity of democratic multinational federations is that, besides individual rights, they might also recognize some group rights in national sub-units. Group rights typically become, then, one source of asymmetry between sub-units of multinational federations (McGarry & O’Leary 2005). However, the Russian constitution has not directly specified the groups. Further, it avoided the use of the ethnic categorizations and the discourse of indigeneity and titularity, recognizing only the status of indigenous small-numbered peoples. The debate was not over, and the lack of explicit link to ethnicity except in the titles of sub-units left the possibility for a later reinterpretation of Russia’s political identity.

The constitution listed, among the federation units, republics and autonomies that were titled after their titular nationalities and were implicitly supposed to ensure their self-governance (see Bowring 2010: 49-50). At the same time, the constitution established an equal status for the Russian regions, although the republics received two additional rights in comparison to other regions: the right to have their own constitution and the right to designate their state languages. All the republican constitutions repeated the formula of the ‘multinational people’ of the republic as the source of their authority, but attempted to continue their state-building on the nation-state model. However the constitutions of the republics had to be passed by a constitutional assembly and not by the referendum. In effect, the republics could not claim the popular legitimization for their pursuit of nationalizing policies. In practice, the asymmetry in powers remained not only between the republics and other types of regions but also between different republics. Therefore, the Russian constitution laid down the foundations of the federal system but had not solved all contradictory issues regarding diversity management, and much was left for the future interpretation of constitutional provisions (see Bowring 2010: 51-52).

The legitimation of federalism remained an important issue of controversy. William Riker described the formation of the federation as the process of politics ‘coming-together’ under such incentives as the existence of an external threat and the promise of territorial expansion (Riker 1975: 114). Alfred Stepan suggested conceptualizing the cases when a federal system emerged as a result of constitutional devolution of powers, as a ‘holding together’ model and the cases of forming federation by an utterly coercive centralizing power as a ‘putting together’ model, of which he named the USSR as an exemplary case (Stepan 1999: 22–23). Reflecting partly this distinction of ‘holding together’ versus ‘coming-together’, two approaches to federalism were conceptualized in Russia as ‘constitution-based’

federation and 'treaty-based' federation, depending on whether the center is said to have delegated its powers to regions or vice versa. The internal threat of possible state disintegration provided incentive for federalization through political bargaining (see Burgess 2009: 36-37). The Russian constitution has not incorporated the 1992 Federation Treaty and itself delineated the powers between the federal center and the regions, thus, creating a constitutional federation.

This was a break from previous arrangements and a step away from the democratic path, but not yet the point in the full-scale confrontation. The politically and economically strong republics continued to bargain for an asymmetrical status in the federation. The referendum on the constitution failed in Tatarstan and Chechnya. In the case of Chechnya the confrontation led to the first Chechen war that excluded partition as a possible outcome. Tatarstan entered negotiations and was able to strike a power-sharing deal with the federal authorities, fixed in the bilateral treaty on the delimitation of areas of authority and power. This created the precedent, and many other republics and regions also signed similar treaties between 1994 and 1998 that recognized decentralization and diversification of regional politics, even though most treaties were in contradiction with the new federal constitution (Bowring 2010: 57-59).

Republics had to relinquish their aspiration of a treaty-based federation but acquired better treaty conditions in comparison to other regions. Some republics retained significant political autonomy and established strong presidential regimes that were sometimes characterized as 'ethnocracies' because of their preferential treatment of the titular nationalities. The upgrade in the political status of some other republics, especially of those with the titular minority, had not significantly empowered their titular elites. With the decline in ethnic mobilization in the republics by the mid-1990s, the new configuration of power relations emerged that allowed the federal authorities to challenge the position of the titular elites. Social constructivism was applied as a theoretical ground for the proliferation of the integrationist approach in Russia.

At the time of the 1996 presidential election campaign, Yeltsin signed the Concept of the State Nationalities Policy (Presidential Decree, 15 June 1996). According to the Concept, the aim of the nationalities policy was to ensure 'the conditions for the rightful social and national-cultural development for all peoples of Russia, and for the consolidation of an all-Russia civic and spiritual-ethical community on the basis of the rights and freedoms on the individual and the citizen'. Thus, the Concept prioritized cultural over political development,

individual rights over group rights and the civic unity. This was a policy document, thus, indicative of the approaches to diversity management, but its significance was restricted because it was not translated automatically into institutional changes (see Rutland 2010).

Since the early 1990s the idea of national-cultural autonomy was initially introduced as an alternative to ethnic federalism and group rights, but the opposition of the elites in the republics resulted in a compromise on the issue (see Drobizheva 2013: 112, Codagnone & Filippov 2000: 274-280). The Concept proposed national-cultural autonomy as a new form of non-territorial self-determination of ethnic groups which became complementary to ethnic federalism. National-cultural autonomies targeted individuals of the ethnic groups without national territories or residing outside the borders of their titular territories. The Federal Law (17 June 1996) provided citizens with the right to create national-cultural autonomy as a form of public associations and receive state support for their activity. In practice, this form has not become a breakthrough and its implementation was assessed as a failure (Osipov 2013, Prina 2015, chapter 8).

Was Russia an integrated or a pluralist federation? The Russian federal system included mostly elements of an integrated federation. These were supremacy of the federal laws, fiscal centralization and exclusive federal jurisdiction over law enforcement and courts. But territorial self-government of some ethnic groups, who usually were in the numerical majority in their 'homelands' and under the control of their elites, was an element of a pluralist federation. Ethnic federalism was the backbone of the accommodationist strategy that targeted territorially concentrated groups. The policy towards indigenous small-numbered peoples combined accommodationist and integrationist elements. National-cultural autonomy was intended to integrate territorially dispersed groups. To the extent the latter form remained ineffective, the *laissez faire* policy amounted to a *de facto* assimilationist approach towards the smaller groups. Therefore, the mixture of strategies addressed different situations of regions and groups.

3. Authoritarian Tendencies and Recentralization of the 2000s

3.1 'Managed Democracy' and 'Power Vertical'

As, according to a two-term limit, Yeltsin could not run for the third presidency term, the political establishment was looking for a successor. After several short-term prime ministers,

in August 1999 Vladimir Putin was appointed prime minister. In September the Kremlin initiated the creation of a newly pro-government electoral bloc *Unity*. Quite unexpectedly, in December 1999 in the parliamentary elections *Unity* came second after the communists. This was a humiliation for the region-based coalition *Fatherland—All Russia*, which represented regional elites and hoped to become another ‘party of power’ but came only third in the elections. The year 2000 brought the change of the leader in the Kremlin, when Yeltsin resigned and named Putin as his successor and elevated to be acting president. In March 2000 Putin was elected president.

The turn of the millennium signified the start of recentralization and evolution of the political regime towards a hybrid regime that combined democratic procedures and authoritarian practices, dubbed ‘managed democracy’. As his first step towards the consolidation of power, Putin established state control over mass media by destroying the media empires of Oligarchs. Further, he ensured control over the federal parliament, paving the way to presidentialism and later to super-presidentialism. His next targets were regional elites. Regional separatism was among the threats that Putin envisaged when justifying his move towards recentralization and undermining of the autonomy of regions. During the first years of his presidency Vladimir Putin spent systemic efforts at establishing a ‘vertical of power’ (Gel’man 2015: 76-81).

Adding a layer above the regions, seven federal districts were created to provide the coordination of federal agencies in the regions and headed by an appointed plenipotentiary representative of the Russian president. The federal authorities abrogated the bilateral treaties and initiated the campaign of bringing the regional legislations into concordance with the federal legislation, including the removal of the provisions on sovereignty from the republican constitutions. Since 2002 two appointed regional representatives working fulltime started to be members of the Federation Council instead of heads of regional executives and legislations, which diminished the political weight of this body. It turned rather into a body representing corporative interests of vertically integrated clienteles (see Bowring 2010: 60-62). In many cases, non-titular Moscow-based representatives were appointed which reduced the role of this body as a channel of ethnic representation (Ross & Turovsky 2013: 64-67, 71-73).

A new party politics was installed as another mechanism of control over the regions (Federal Laws, 14 June 2001 and 12 June 2002). Only federal parties organized on a statewide basis were made eligible to participate. The creation of political parties on the grounds of

ethnic or religious affiliation and regional parties was explicitly prohibited. Further, obligatory party membership was increased and the number of parties decreased in a few years from 46 to 7. In 2001, *United Russia* was established through a merger of *Unity* and *Fatherland—All Russia*, deputy groups *Regions of Russia* and *People's Deputy*, which actually amounted to a takeover. In the 2003 elections *United Russia's* list received 37.6% of votes and the party candidates celebrated victories in 45% of single mandate districts. Due to the conversion of votes into seats at the expense of those parties which did not pass the threshold of 5% and by attracting independence in a few days after the election, the party obtained the constitutional majority in the State Duma (Gel'man 2015: 84-88).

An effect of the prohibition of regional parties was that in the early 2000s the federal parties were sidelined from the regional politics. The regional legislatures lost their last source of autonomy in the regional political landscapes. The heads of the regions consolidated their power even further without needing to belong to a party, being supported by regional electoral blocs. In 2003-2004 elections *United Russia* had not won in many regional legislatures. To stimulate penetration of federal parties into regional party politics, the formation of electoral blocs was prohibited in 2005. Furthermore, at least half of the seats of regional parliaments were made to be elected proportionally by the list. This provided an incentive for the heads of the regions to join *United Russia* (Golosov 2011: 626-628).

The 2003 and the following 2007 Duma elections brought a relative decline in ethnic representation, attributed to a tighter control and the dominance of *United Russia* (Chaisty 2013: 257). At the same time, membership in the party of power opened new channels of participation. The federal government included members of minority ethnic background, such as Rashid Nurgaliev – an ethnic Tatar - as minister of interior, or Sergei Shoigu as a long-time minister of emergency situations and *United Russia* leader, whose father is an ethnic Tuvins.

In March 2004 Putin was re-elected president in the first round and continues to keep this position until this day with the break of Medvedev's presidency in 2008-2012. The pivotal measure that amounted to establishing an authoritarian rule was the abolishing of the elections of presidents of the republics and governors of the regions in 2004. A new procedure was established, according to which the Kremlin nominated a candidate who was then to be appointed by the regional legislature. In practice, presidential representatives in the federal districts had a central role in the selection of candidates. In the short term, many influential regional chief executives retained their positions, inter alia, because their 'electoral machines' were able to deliver the electoral results demanded in the Kremlin (see Hale 2003).

3.2 Defederalization and Depoliticization of Ethnicity

The abolishment of elections of regional chief executives undermined the principle of the vertical division of power between the federal centre and the regions. Thus, the Kremlin's 'federal reforms' resulted in a decline of federalism in Russia, although formally it was maintained. Criticism now targeted ethnic federalism, which was portrayed as a threat to the country's unity. Voiced previously by Zhirinovsky, the idea of *gubernization* was present in public discourse, which implied the removal of the link to ethnicity in the title of some regions and the unification of the types of regions, making all regions equal in form of, for examples, 'provinces' (see Oversloot 2013: 103-105).

Some steps in this direction were implemented. The creation of federal districts was one such step. Between 2005 and 2008, the merger of six out of ten autonomous districts with their host regions might not only have been a step towards *gubernization*, but also the intentional change of Russia's political map in such a way that ethnic regions cover now much less than about half of the territory they covered hitherto. Dominance of the party of power since 2007 and incremental authoritarianism would have also allowed more radical structural changes. However, the federal districts have not become the primary federation units. Republics and autonomous districts as separate region types were maintained. As an exception, the federal center and the Republic of Tatarstan renewed their power-sharing treaty in 2007 (see Oversloot 2013: 92-93, 98-101). To be sure, the symbolic reconfiguration of the republics' political status effectively blocked efforts at their own nation and state-building.

Instead of a conflict-prone removal of the republics, the Kremlin turned to nation building. The nation-building agenda included a reshaping of the conceptual framework. The term 'national' was now exclusively reserved for the federal state level and the term 'ethnic' for the sub-state level. For example, instead of the concepts 'nationalities policy', 'national republics' and 'national school', the terms 'ethnic policy', 'ethnic republics' and 'schools with an ethnocultural component' were introduced in public discourse. This amounted to a representation of the state not as multinational but as a multiethnic federation. However, the only remaining ethnic characteristic of republics and autonomies was their title, which symbolically marked them as homelands of their titular peoples but ceased to have any constitutional-legal meaning. This was an element of a broader policy of 'de-ethnicization of politics', which aimed at the removal of ethnicity from the political domain and its restriction to a cultural sphere (see Codagnone & Filippov 2000: 282).

The first official document that introduced the term ‘Russian nation’ building was the Concept of the State Nationalities Educational Policy that emerged as part of the education reform. This document intended to ‘consolidate the multinational people of the Russian Federation into a single Russian political nation’ (Ministry of Education Order, 3 August 2006). The official introduction of the term in this document is emblematic, because education had to become the principal tool of identity building directed at the homogenization of citizenry. The education reform significantly curtailed the possibility of regional authorities to promote regional identities and languages. Even different policy patterns were applied to different regions and groups, the supply of public services in non-Russian languages in education was cut everywhere (see Prina 2015, Chapters 5 and 6, Zamyatin 2014: 105-110).

The central question of what nation should be built remained; whether it should be a civic or ethnic nation. Policymakers leaned towards the model of the civic ‘Russian nation’ as a territorial community of citizens sharing common values, which is also complementary to democracy. However the contraposition of the civic vs ethnic nation did not quite work (see Shevel 2011). De-ethnicization was opposed not only in republics, where it reminded many of the plan to merge Soviet nations into the ‘Soviet people’. Ethnic Russian nationalists also opposed it and demanded, instead, the recognition of Russia as the state of an ethnic Russian nation based on the statistics that ethnic Russians composed a ‘vast majority’ in the total population. Nationalist discourse was implicitly present throughout the post-Soviet period but became publicly visible especially since the mid 2000s. In a sense, the rise of ethnic Russian nationalism was a reaction to the USSR collapse and nationalism in its former republics and minority nationalisms in Russia. Proliferation of the Russian nationalist organizations contributed to a steady deterioration of inter-ethnic relations in the country (see Pain 2013).

The ministry for regional development took over some of the functions of the abolished ministry for nationalities affairs and developed a new policy document in nationalities policy, but this was rejected due to mentioning the status of ethnic Russians as a ‘state-founding nation’ (Rutland 2010: 130). The Kremlin ignored this and similar demands to avoid tensions with leadership of the republics until the ethnic categorization entered the official domain for the first time at the turn of the millennium for external use in the context of ‘compatriots’ living abroad. An ethnic reading of the concept of ‘compatriots’ fixed in the Law on Compatriots Abroad (Federal Law, 24 May 1999) was an exception to civic terminology used officially hitherto. A reason for this move might have been the failure to address ‘the problem

of Russians abroad' in the 1990s on the civic platform through introduction of dual citizenship for Russians living in post-Soviet countries (Zevelev 2008).

In sum, in the early 2000s, the state moved towards a more integrated federation, although the pluralist element was nominally maintained. Since the mid-2000s, Russia *de facto* stopped functioning as federation because neither democracy, nor autonomy of regions was left. As a result, Russia repeated the path of the Soviet Union in becoming not only a 'pseudo-federation' but also a 'pseudo-pluralist federation' (see McGarry & O'Leary 2005: 34-35). The exclusion of ethnicity from the public sphere is the essential feature of the integrationist approach. Furthermore, elements of the assimilationist strategy started to be noticeable in education. At the same time, the symbolic link between ethnicity and territories maintained the significance of ethnic regions as an accommodation device even without effective self-rule.

4. Authoritarianism and Unification of the 2010s

4.1 'Electoral Authoritarianism' and Unification

The sole proportional principle and elevation of the entry threshold from 5 to 7% were introduced for the 2007 State Duma elections. After the conversion of voices into seats in the State Duma the party of power obtained 70% of seats. *United Russia* became the dominant party both in the State Duma and most of the regional legislatures. Changes in electoral rules signposted the shift towards the regime that scholars label 'electoral authoritarianism'. On the scale between democracy and authoritarianism, scholars posit this regime closely to the latter. Although elections were preserved, they ceased to be the mechanism of political change (Gel'man 2015: 6-8, 99-100).

In the 2011 Duma elections, *United Russia* obtained only slightly more than half of the seats in the State Duma even after massive electoral fraud. This time the conversion of seats was insignificant, as there were virtually no small parties left beneath the entry threshold to provide the margin. In response to mass rallies in December 2011, the electoral legislation was reformed to improve legitimacy without meaningful liberalization. The mixed principle was reintroduced and the entry threshold lowered back to 5% starting from the 2016 Duma elections. As a result, the number of parties jumped to almost the previous level, but the intention was to split the support for opposition parties (Golosov 2012: 10-11). Since 2011,

the procedure for the formation of the Federation Council was also somewhat changed so that only a deputy of a regional assembly or municipal council could become its member (Turovsky 2010: 29).

The promotion of Putin's appointees to the positions of regional chief executives often resulted in the appointment of outsiders who lacked experience and local contacts and often became unpopular among the populations. In 2009, the procedure was changed to address this drawback, in such a way that the party that won regional elections could propose the candidate for the post of the regional highest official. In 2012, the procedure was changed again, creating the possibility for regions to introduce elections of chief executives to boost their legitimacy.

The regions could now decide themselves whether the regional chief executives should be elected by the local population or appointed. In the appointment procedure, the parties represented in the federal and/or regional parliament could propose up to three candidates for the post of the chief executive. From this pool, the Russian president nominates three candidates and presents them to the regional parliament, which then appoints the candidate who collects the most voices. Typically the term of the chief executive in office finishes before the elections and the Russian president identifies his favourite by appointing him as a temporarily acting chief executive. In effect, the Kremlin retained control over chief executives (Golosov 2012: 11-12).

In practice, in 2010 the last heavy-weight regional leaders of Yeltsin's era, such as the presidents of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, were forced to leave. Even more dramatic was the turnover among the heads of regional departments of law-enforcement agencies. In the same year, the number of deputies in regional legislatures was standardized and the campaign initiated to rename the republics' chief executive office from 'president' to 'head of republic'. This was a symbolic gesture meant to restrict 'delegative' legitimation of presidential power exclusively to the all-Russian level (see Heinemann-Grüder 2009: 67, Petrov 2013: 112). Thus, after further unification of the institutional framework, the political landscape reminds one nowadays more of a unitary state (see Petrov 2013).

Despite the successful enforcement of the 'vertical of power', the recent economic troubles demonstrated the continued weakness of non-democratic state institutions. The main criterion for keeping individuals in the chief executive's position became not effectiveness and accountability to the population but loyalty to Putin and the ability to safeguard regional support for *United Russia* (Golosov 2011: 631-633). In these circumstances, informal

networks gain more and more importance behind the façade of formal institutions (see Ledeneva 2013). Participation in clientelistic networks became inevitable for successful careers of politicians. Appointed regional chief executives became clients to their Moscow patron.

“Electoral authoritarianism, rather than simply suppressing the autonomy of most powerful subnational actors, incorporates them by expanding their effective control over the regional political arenas” (Demchenko & Golosov 2016: 61). Informal networks and practices benefitted titular elites in some republics but not in others (see Prina 2015, chapter 4). Despite the decline of federalism, titular elites in the republics like Tatarstan or Chechnya maintained their dominant position among their regional elites. Alternatively, the dominant ‘Russian’ regional elite used the co-optation of minority elite members as an element of ethnic control in some other republics (see Zamyatin 2016).

4.2 Nation Building and Ethnic Diversity

The third term of Vladimir Putin in the office of Russia’s President indicated a shift to a more assertive Russian foreign and domestic policy. The Russian leadership sought to find popular support for its political ambitions, which was difficult to achieve in the conditions of the people’s mistrust of ideologies after the bankruptcy of Soviet communism (see, e.g., March 2012: 404-405). In the search for a political identity as ‘we’ against ‘them’, the most attainable appeared to be the ideology of official nationalism, which is served in public discourse as ‘patriotism’ that ‘is the only possible national idea in Russia’, in Putin’s recent words. At the policy level, the Russian authorities officially declared nation building their strategic goal, although there is still no consensus on which nation should be built (see, e.g., Gorenburg 2014).

Nation building officially became the policy goal with the approval of a new policy document in the field – Russia’s Strategy of the State Nationalities Policy (Presidential Decree, 19 December 2012). This policy document has the format of ‘strategy’ probably to stick out in a row of ‘concepts’. Thus, after years in search of the ‘national idea’, the centralizing state took upon itself the task of identity-building. In other words, the central role of the state predetermined a top-down nation-building project (see, e.g., Zvereva 2010: 87). Realizing the mobilizing potential of the nationalist ideology, the Kremlin pragmatically decided to control and utilize nationalism in the interest of the regime (March 2012: 402).

The civic model of the nation became the basis for official nation building. The Strategy indicated as the first policy aim ‘the strengthening the unity of the (civic) Russian nation’, which had to be achieved, *inter alia*, through the promotion of civic patriotism and civic identity. The other policy aims occupy a secondary place. The maintenance of ethno-cultural diversity was retained as a policy aim but ethnic identities are clearly presented as subordinate to an overarching national identity. In practice, many implementation measures directed at diversity maintenance of the Federal Programme ‘Strengthening the Unity of the Russian Nation and the Ethno-Cultural Development of the Peoples of Russia’ (Government Decree, 25 August 2013) are there for showing off, while considerably less funds are assigned for diversity maintenance than for unity promotion (Government Order, 22 March 2014).

The other two aims are a novelty, namely the assistance to migrants in their adaptation and the harmonization of inter-ethnic relations. Finally, one more aim, added to the document at the last moment, is securing citizens’ rights. In the view of one of the drafters, ‘there is the need to recognize the right to voluntary assimilation, the right of a citizen to choose language and culture, the right to be in several cultures’. At the same time, ‘in 1990 the policy goal had been securing rights and requests of citizens. ... in the 2000s the president ... formulated more topical aims...’ (Tishkov 2013: 14-15).

The official attention to an increase in the share of those Russian citizens who consider the all-Russian civic identity as their first identity and the most important in the possible hierarchy of identities is indicative. The strategy draft mentioned this ratio as the main indicator for the policy effectiveness evaluation, although it was left out of the final version. Nevertheless, this newly created system of monitoring included the indicator. Authorities are eager to produce sociological data that shows that more than half of Russian citizens hold the primary civic identity. In fact, the researchers point out that there is a certain contradiction in official rhetoric on national identity: while publicly the nation is reported to have been already created, intellectuals are urged to make their contribution in its creation (Zvereva 2010: 87). For the time being, ‘efforts to define Russian polity and society primarily in civic terms do not appear, to date, to be very successful’ (see Protsyk & Harzl 2012: 10).

The problem of the project is that a strong civil society and democratic institutions are lacking in Russia, which makes the formation of a civic nation virtually impossible (Pain 2009). Despite the rhetoric, the top-down strategy gives reason to categorize the project not as one of civic nationalism but as that of state nationalism or official nationalism. The continued existence of ethnic regions that entrench ethno-national identities is an obstacle to the nation-

state agenda. The presence of complementary ethnic, religious and regional cleavages produce a divided society. If the political salience of ethnic identities is fluid, then one should not underestimate the recurrent character of ethnic mobilization (see Pildes 2008). A possible weakening of the regime is likely to result in a new wave of ethnic mobilization.

In the last years, the problem of identity building came to the fore of everyday politics in Russia on the rise of anti-immigration popular sentiment, xenophobia and the ongoing aggravation of inter-ethnic tensions in the country. Attempts by authorities to capitalize on popular fears, caused by the spread of nationalist rhetoric in mass media, deepened ethnic cleavages and, thus, undermined the goal of civic unity. Yet, playing with nationalism might be a dangerous game, as it might escape control (Verkhovskii 2014: 29). If until recently there was a clear official preference for civic nation building, then nowadays the picture is more complicated due to a gradual spread of ethnic Russian nationalism, which advances the vision of an ethnic Russian nation. Practically all major political parties had to adapt their programs accordingly. The nationalist agenda changed political discourse in Russia and urged authorities to add ethnic Russian color to their nation-building project. Nowadays, official civic nationalism falls back on ethnic Russian attributes (see Prina 2015).

Lately authorities renewed their search for an ideology and made moves towards the re-ideologization of political discourse. Despite the official adherence to civic nationalism in internal policy, 'Eurasianist', 'civilisational' and neo-imperialist ideas have penetrated public debate. While the projects have significant differences, their authors belong to a common discursive space (see, e.g., Malinova 2010: 68). The 'compatriots' policy was adjusted to the new trends widening its target in a very broad manner from 'ethnic Russians to former Soviet citizens' (see Shevel 2011: 192-193; Federal Law, 23 July 2010). The Russophone and ethnic visions of the nation continue to dominate in Russia's foreign policy. The projects of a nation based on ethnic, religious and linguistic ties are in demand especially on the background of the events in Ukraine.

Observers point out that inconsistency continued to be a feature of Russia's nationalities policy throughout the period. 'But theoretical inconsistency of concepts does not signify their inconsistency in the framework of the political strategy' (Verkhovskii 2014: 21). A variety of discursive resources are at the disposal of policymakers in their building of the Russian nation. The pragmatism of the Kremlin allows a measure of flexibility, when 'the concept of the 'Russian nation' covers and absorbs all possible identities' (Zvereva 2010: 82-85). According to some scholars, parallel nation-building projects could coexist because in their

purposeful ambiguity they serve various political ends, resulting in a wide range of seemingly inconsistent policies (see Shevel 2011: 195-199). For example, the civic project used to foster national identity in domestic policy; the project, based on a nation defined in ethnic terms, served to impose pressure on the neighboring countries through ‘compatriots’.

For the time being, it is still not entirely clear whether the policymakers would decide to present at some point a coherent vision of the nation-to-be-built. In this context, the change in diversity management is informative. Unification of regional political landscapes narrowed the scope of accommodation. The burden of diversity maintenance went to the regions, which continued to pursue varying policies, from power sharing to domination. It is notable that integration is not listed among the means of the promotion of the overarching national identity. The Nationalities Policy Strategy does not use the term ‘integration’ with regards to the traditional groups but only strives at ‘a successful cultural and social adaptation and integration of immigrants’ (p. 17). Rather, national identity is asserted through routine activities of authorities pursuing the symbolic policy of the hierarchization of identities with the civic identity on top. At the same time, the hegemony of the dominant group, ethnic Russians, becomes more visible in public discourse and blurs the line between national identity and ethnic Russian identity, because they share symbols such as the Russian language.

Conclusion

When operationalized in the conceptual framework for state-building, Russia’s constitutional design and practice of diversity management does not fit easily into categories of either integrationist or accommodationist approaches (Protsyk & Harzl 2013: 10). This is not an exception, because in reality the states often pursue a mixture of strategies. The analysis of strategic features reveals how the combination of strategies employed in Russia evolved during the post-Soviet period. The predominant strategy depended on the regime transition and the corresponding goal of identity building.

Liberalization resulted in the partition of the former union republics. In Russia, the democratic transition correlated with the prevalence of the accommodationist approach based on the model of multinational federation. It has to be noted that the *de facto* multinational federation became both a device that symbolically recognized the ‘multinationality’ of the state in constitutional identity building and a political institution introduced in the state-

building. Federalization was part of the democratization agenda but decentralization of the state also became the means to avoid the country's disintegration.

As a result, ethnic federalism became associated in the public attitudes with a weak state but also with democracy (see Drobizheva 2013: 168). The first institutional step away from democracy was taken at the time of 'critical juncture' in October 1993. This consisted not only in that a zero-sum end of the conflict allowed the winner to establish semi-presidentialism in the constitution, thus, implanting the seed for super-presidentialism and authoritarian tendencies (Gelman 2015), but also annulling the outcomes of the federal bargaining fixed in the Federation Treaty, which had not become part of the constitution.

The constitutional setting served as the frame for a multinational federation that combined elements of an integrated and pluralist federation for integration and accommodation of larger territorially concentrated groups and national-cultural autonomy for integration of territorially dispersed groups. The attempt to substitute a territorial pluralist solution with a non-territorial one failed. The continued existence of ethnically-based federation units with their own constitutions and state languages was the primary element of accommodation. At the same time, super-presidentialism, state-wide political parties and undivided sovereignty became the marks of republican integrationism.

Under the authoritarian tendencies, ethnic federalism was formally maintained but has been undermined, especially since 2005. The curtailment of the democratization agenda correlated with the shift in the model from a multinational federation towards a nation-state. The adoption of the nation-state model was justified by the demand for democratization, but actually nation building was viewed as the remedy to prevent separatism and guarantee the country's territorial integrity. Expectedly, new identity politics were accompanied by the shift in the predominant strategy from accommodation to integration. The vision of a civic nation was being developed during the 1990s and 2000s. The process culminated in the approval of the 2012 Nationalities Policy Strategy. After that, in a swing of the pendulum, the vision turned towards a mixed civic-ethnic and ethnic nation, in particular, due to the popular rise of Russian nationalism.

Under the current regime of electoral authoritarianism, a radical solution would have been the complete removal of ethnic regions by their merger with larger regions. But the major reshaping of political institutions has not happened. The Kremlin saw both troubles of such a project and benefits in keeping existing arrangements, because these provided political control and delivered desired outcomes in elections. At the same time, nation-building efforts

have intensified significantly in recent years, and are increasingly acquiring an ethnic dimension. Despite the pledge to maintain ethnic diversity, the building of an ethnic nation presumes the use of assimilationist devices especially in education policy and language policy. At that, the persistent and reinforcing ethno-religious and regional cleavages is one of the major obstacles countervailing the nation-building project. Even if only symbolic, the retained federal structure of the state adds to the complexity of the task, because identity building is very much about symbolic politics (see Malinova 2012).

Therefore, during the post-Soviet period the political regime change from democratization to the establishment of an authoritarian rule correlated with the model shift from a multinational federation towards a nation-state. The evolution in Russia's strategies of diversity management from the emphasis on accommodation to that on integration and assimilation also correlated with the regime change. Their negative correlation with decentralization and recentralization as the stages of state-building supports the argument that not so much normative considerations but estimations of power were behind the strategy choice (see McGarry et al. 2008: 87-88).

State-building typically includes as one of its aspects identity building, which is used as another tool of strengthening the state, although it might be also presented as a step towards democratization. The representation of the pursuit of nation building as democratic in the multinational settings of plural societies is problematic and might be justified only in the form of civic nation building. Perhaps, the main lesson of the Russian case is that, when the democratization agenda is scrapped, the corresponding curtailment of the civic project leaves diversity management without firm normative foundation.

A new wave of democratization might be expected at some point in Russia, which has some necessary structural preconditions for this, if assessed in terms of modernization theory (see Gel'man 2015: 27-28). At the same time, democratization will again face difficulties, because the tasks of nation and state-building were not solved and the associated challenges will inevitably re-emerge at the time of the next 'critical juncture'. Under a new situation, the probable rise of minority ethnic mobilization would again raise the issue of diversity management to the political agenda. The project of a 'Russian nation' might fail, especially in its ethnic incarnation, becoming associated with Putin's authoritarian regime in the same way as the project of building the 'Soviet people' became associated with the Brezhnev stagnation era. If one projects the ethno-political pendulum metaphor into the future, one might expect that democratization would be accompanied by a more minority-friendly policy. The situation

will be different from that of the time of the USSR dissolution. Will Russia be sufficiently diverse and are ethnic divisions still deep to justify accommodation?

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